

No gag order on delegates discussing Dr Mahathir's remarks

KUALALUMPUR: There is no gag order on Umno delegates discussing Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's censure of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad said yesterday that delegates were free to discuss the issue involving the former Prime Minister and the incumbent at the party general assembly next week.

"Umno has never issued a gag order on its delegates. We have never come out with anything of the sort," he said.

Radzi said Dr Mahathir had not confirmed attendance at the assembly.

"It is still early. He has a week left."

Speaking at a briefing for the media at Putra World Trade Centre, Radzi said Umno delegates were not allowed to discuss personal matters during the debate.

Asked whether any action would be taken should a delegate bring up personal matters, he said there had never been a problem before.

"This is the party's biggest forum. I don't think delegates would waste their or others' time by doing this," he said.

The general assembly begins next Monday with Abdullah briefing Supreme Council members, Wanita, Youth and Puteri executive council members and divisional committee members.

Deputy president Datuk Seri Najib Razak will open the Wanita, Youth and Puteri wing general assemblies on Monday night.

"As there are no elections for office bearers this time, the three wings will only get a day for their assemblies. They only need to elect 10 delegates each for the party general assembly proper," said Radzi.

The general assembly will take place from Wednesday to Friday.

Radzi said three motions would be discussed during the assembly: The presidential address; the economy and education; and, religion and society.

Invitations have been sent to 33 political parties from 30 countries, of which 19 from 18 countries have confirmed attendance.

Out of the 60 Umno overseas clubs, 58 have confirmed that they will be sending delegates.

Radzi said a total of 2,554 delegates would be attending the assembly.

The number, he said, did not include seven names submitted by the Kinabatangan division.

"The seven have only been given observer status because the division breached party regulations. Regulations state

that the delegates must be chosen by members of the division, but the seven were not."

Meanwhile, Umno Youth information chief Datuk Azimi Daim said there would be only one motion tabled during the wing's assembly.

The motion, he said, would be to discuss Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein's address to members.

However, he said, there would be several aspects to Hishammuddin's speech.

He would be touching on various issues such as religion, the political relationship and co-operation between the Youth wings of all BN component parties, the economy, issues relating to Muslims and the Malays and how Umno Youth could get more involved in international issues and organisations.

Speaking to reporters after

a meeting of representatives of division youth wings, Azimi said there was an understanding between the representatives that they would "stand by the leadership" with regard to the Dr Mahathir-Abdullah issue.

"We do not want delegates to talk too much about this issue as we want to focus on issues that affect the Malays and Muslims.

"We also want to focus on how the government can improve certain aspects such as integrity, quality of public service and government administration," he said.

Azimi said the party supreme council had already deliberated on the matter and come up with a stand.

"Let's not waste time on it. Whatever it is, the Umno Youth stand remains the same—we will continue to support our government leadership."